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Butz' New Eloquence

Agriculture Secretary Earl L. Butz has always been the kind of public speaker who could make the Gettysburg Address sound like a crop report.

But lately, he has been gathering steam on the stump. His flat, Midwestern monotone has risen to new rhetorical heights on behalf of President Ford's campaign.

Unfortunately, Butz' new-found eloquence has dubious roots. Career civil servants, barred by law from political activities, have been writing the secretary's speeches. They have also been compelled to prepare background papers on agricultural issues for the Ford campaign staff.

The man who has been orchestrating this misuse of the civil service is Butz' deputy under secretary, Paul Theis, whose specialty is political campaigning. For more than 16 years, he was director of the Republican National Committee, which is devoted to electing Republicans to Congress.

In 1974, President Ford brought Theis into the White House. He moved early this year to the Agriculture Department, where he has now pressed three reluctant career employees into service churning out campaign material for Mr. Ford, Butz and company.

A GS-14 civil servant, for example, wrote Butz' June 12 keynote address before the Michigan state Republican convention. It was entitled "The Republican Revolution."

In his droning monotone, Butz read the words prepared for him at the taxpayers' expense. "It was in the cold light of a New England spring morning," he began dramatically, "that the American revolution began just over 200 years ago." That revolution continues, declared Butz, "under the clear light within the Republican Party. And under the leadership of President Gerald R. Ford."

Having thus aligned Mr. Ford with the founding fathers, Butz moved to the climax of his speech. "What I'm going to do," he intoned, "is tell you flat out: President Ford deserves the Republican Party nomination because he

is the best possible candidate—and he is a winner."

Butz always includes a pro-forma attack on the overgrown federal bureaucracy in his speeches. But he doesn't mention that he keeps at least three bureaucrats busy writing political speeches and papers.

Footnote: Theis acknowledged that a career civil servant worked on the June 12 speech. But Theis insisted that he added the language calling for Mr. Ford's nomination. He feels this is not improper since he is a political appointee. He also conceded that the Agriculture Department has prepared background papers for Ford but contended that the department has prepared similar reports for past Presidents.

Wiretap Flap—What started in bipartisan harmony at the White House three months ago is now ending in acrimony on Capitol Hill.

Confidential White House minutes show that both Democratic and Republican leaders supported President Ford's wiretap legislation last March.

The President's bill would set up a seven-judge panel to approve wiretaps. Rep. Robert Kastenmeir (D-Wis.) has now charged that the panel will be meaningless if the judges simply are going to rubber-stamp the Justice Department's requests.

He wants the judges to have the power to investigate the evidence to determine whether it justifies wiretapping. He also wants to make it more difficult for the Justice Department to tap the telephones of an American citizen than those of a foreign national.

The Democratic majority in Congress will probably add these provisions to the President's bill by the time it reaches his desk. This Democratic tinkering has upset some Republican leaders who thought they had a consensus at a closed-door White House meeting on March 23.

And that's the way the confidential transcript of the meeting reads. "Time is of the essence," the President pleaded after Attorney General Edward Levi explained the bill. "A high degree of unanimity is important."